

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIL #0387/01 0491033
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 181033Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7423
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0725
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 6365
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA// IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2443
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 8416
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 2413
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

UNCLAS ISLAMABAD 000387

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: FEBRUARY 18, 2010

Summary: Coverage of the government's acceptance of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry's recommendations regarding the appointment of judges and the ensuing tussle between the executive and judiciary dominated media on Thursday morning. All newspapers highlighted Chief Justice Chaudhry's meeting with Prime Minister Gilani that helped ease tensions in the country. The capture of Taliban's top commander Mullah Bradar continued to generate ripples in media. Newspapers reported that the White House is calling it a "big success," Secretary Clinton describing the arrest as "serving the best interests of both the countries" and Ambassador Holbrooke called it a "significant development." Newspapers also reported that Mr. Holbrooke will arrive in Islamabad today (Thursday). Former Deputy Secretary Armitage's meeting with Army Chief General Kayani, Punjab Chief Minister Sharif, and PML-Q leaders also received media coverage. Reports on the "secret meeting" between Afghan administration and Taliban in Maldives also received prominent display. Both electronic and print media highlighted reports that a local court in Sargodha denied bail to five Americans accused of having links with terrorists. Several major dailies published a Washington Times' report quoting Pakistani Ambassador to U.S. Haqqani as saying that Pakistan will pursue a civilian nuclear deal with the U.S, and is urging Washington to help build up Pakistan's military to counter Indian defense spending. Media reported that Afghan army raised their national flag over the main market of the Taliban's southern stronghold of Marjah in Afghanistan. "The News," in its editorial on Mullah Bradar's arrest, observed that "it establishes unequivocally that members of the 'Quetta Shura', whose existence has long been denied by our government, have decamped to Karachi." Meantime, "Dawn," noted that "his arrest sends a signal that Rawalpindi (Pak Army's GHQs) means business and any Afghan Taliban presence in Pakistan will not be tolerated. This in turn could compel some influential Taliban leaders to opt for dialogue, an outcome favored by both Afghanistan and the U.S." In the same vein, "Daily Times," opined that "Baradar's arrest may open the door for negotiations with the Afghan Taliban leadership." End Summary.

TOP STORIES

News Story: Gilani Surrenders To CJ - "The News" (02/18)

"One bold step of Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Tuesday night followed by his rare meeting with Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry on Wednesday eased the prevailing tension in the country altogether and averted a possible clash between the executive and the judiciary. Just minutes after his meeting with Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry at the Prime Minister House, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani announced the good news that he had promised the nation on Tuesday night, saying a notification in suppression of the earlier notifications would be issued tonight

(Wednesday) for the appointment of judges."

News Story: President Signs Summary On Judges Appointment - "Dawn" (02/18)

"President Asif Ali Zardari signed on Wednesday a new summary regarding appointment of three judges of the Supreme Court and 22 additional judges of Lahore High Court (LHC) and nine of Sindh High Court (SHC), presidential spokesman Farhatullah Babar said."

News Story: Baradar's Arrest Confirmed - "Dawn" (02/18)

"The Pakistani military and the U.S. government confirmed on Wednesday that the Afghan Taliban's top commander Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar had been captured. Inter-Services Public Relations said. It gave no details, citing security reasons.... The White House hailed the capture of Mullah Baradar as a 'big success' for joint U.S.-Pakistan efforts to combat extremists, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said."

News Story: Obama Meets Afghan War Cabinet - "Daily Times" (02/18)

"U.S. President Barack Obama on Wednesday gathered his Afghan war cabinet as thousands of U.S.-led troops attacked a Taliban bastion in the first big offensive of his troop surge strategy. Obama convened the meeting in the White House Situation Room, two days after it emerged that U.S. and Pakistani spies had pulled off a major coup by capturing the Taliban's top military commander Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. Among administration heavy hitters at the table were Vice President Joe Biden, Defence Secretary Robert Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and General David Petraeus, head of U.S. Central Command. It was the first major meeting of its kind since the long series of high-level consultations Obama initiated before deciding the troop surge in Afghanistan."

News Story: Baradar's Arrest 'Significant Development': Holbrooke - "Daily Times" (02/18)

"U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke on Wednesday hailed the capture of Taliban military commander Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, whose arrest could deal a heavy blow to the group's eight-year war in Afghanistan. The arrest, confirmed by Pakistan, is the most important Taliban capture since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan. Visiting Kabul, Holbrooke said Baradar 'got caught,' and welcomed the arrest as a 'significant development,' but gave no details."

News Story: Pakistan's Cooperation A Turning Point In Afghan War: U.S. - "Dawn" (02/18)

"Following the arrest of the Taliban military chief in Karachi, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Wednesday described Pakistan's cooperation in the war against terror as serving the best interests of both the countries. Also, the official Voice of America radio noted that Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar's arrest 'signals a change in the Pakistani mindset.'"

News Story: U.S. Working With Pakistan In Spirit Of Partnership - Clinton - "The News" (02/18)

"The United States is working with Pakistan in a spirit of partnership and its cooperation is motivated by what Pakistanis say they need, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said. The chief American diplomat also noted in a speech that the al-Qaeda-linked militants have been victimizing innocent Pakistanis and killed around 2000 civilians in 2009 only. 'We stand with Pakistan's democratic government and people as they work to defeat the insurgents who are targeting their own citizens,' Clinton told the U.S.-Islamic World Forum in Doha, according to a transcript of her speech released by the State Department."

News Story: Holbrooke Due In Pakistan On Thursday - "The News" (02/18)

"U.S. Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke is due to arrive in Pakistan on a two-day visit on Thursday. Sources close to Foreign Office told Geo that Holbrooke will hold meetings

with President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir. The meetings will discuss current Afghanistan situation and Pakistan's role in new U.S. policy, sources say."

News Story: Pak-U.S. Ties To Be Further Strengthened: Armitage; Meets Kayani Shahbaz - "The Nation," "Daily Times" (02/18)

"Former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, on Wednesday met separately with Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and Punjab Chief Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, and exchanged views on common interest. The U.S. delegation appreciated the role of Pakistan in the war against terrorism and said that U.S.-Pak relations would be further strengthened on long-term basis."

News Story: Secret Afghan Meeting Held In Maldives - "Daily Times" (02/18)

"Afghan government and Taliban representatives held a secret meeting last month at a holiday resort in the Maldives, an official source said on Wednesday, a source close to the Maldivian administration told AFP, asking not to be named."

News Story: Sargodha Court Denies Bail To U.S. Terror Suspects - "Daily Times" (02/18)

"An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Wednesday rejected the bail applications of five Americans, accused of having links with terrorists. The Americans were arrested from Sargodha in December 2009 by police and law enforcement agencies on charge of plotting terrorist activities in Pakistan. The Americans were presented before the court amid tight security where they repeated previous claims of having been tortured in custody, a charge denied by Pakistani prison officials."

News Story: Pakistan Needs U.S. Help To Counter Indian Weapons - "Daily Times," "The News" (02/18)

"Pakistan will pursue a civilian nuclear deal with the U.S. and is urging Washington to help build its military to counter massive defence spending by India, Pakistani Ambassador to U.S. Hussain Haqqani said on Wednesday. The ambassador said this in a report published in The Washington Times. 'India is our main concern, as it is buying weapons worth \$100 billion from five countries, including China, and to balance it our relations with the U.S. are very significant,' Haqqani said."

News Story: Afghan Army Raises Flag Over Main Marjah Market - "Daily Times" (02/18)

"The Afghan army raised the national flag in the bullet-ridden main market of the Taliban's southern stronghold of Marjah on Wednesday, as fights continued to break out elsewhere in the town between holed-up Taliban and the coalition troops."

TERRORISM/MILITARY ISSUES

News Story: Afghan Offensive 'Going Well': White House - "The News" (02/18)

"The first big U.S.-led offensive against the Taliban of the new surge strategy is 'going well,' the White House said Wednesday after President Barack Obama was briefed by his top war commander, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said."

News Story: Strong NATO-Pak Ties Must For Fighting Terror: Qureshi - "Daily Times" (02/18)

"Improved cooperation between Pakistan and NATO is vital to success in the 'war against terrorism,' Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said on Wednesday. "It is time to follow a comprehensive strategy to bring about a change in Afghanistan as we share the objectives of a stable, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan," the Minister told NATO's North Atlantic Council in Brussels."

News Story: NATO Airstrike Kills Dozens of Militants - "The News" (02/18)

"NATO forces say an airstrike in Afghanistan has killed more than a dozen militants near the Pakistani border. A foreign soldier was killed in southern Afghanistan while taking part in a massive assault on an area of Helmand province held by the Taliban, NATO said on Wednesday."

News Story: Taliban, Qaeda Have Common Foe In West: Ex-ISI Chief - "Daily Times" (02/18)

"The Taliban and al Qaeda are united against the common foe of U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan and only when they leave will it be possible to divide the two groups, former spy Chief General Ehsanul Haq said on Wednesday. Ties between the two armed militant groups are of high interest because international forces are contemplating talks with the Afghan Taliban to forge a political settlement in Afghanistan and create a split between the group and al Qaeda."

News Story: Karachi - A 'Refuge' But No Base For Taliban - "Daily Times" (02/18)

"The arrest of the top Afghan Taliban military commander from Sindh's capital has raised concern about Taliban in the city, but security analysts say the city is unlikely to become a bastion for the group. While investors have grown used to violence in the Tribal Areas along the border with Afghanistan, trouble in Karachi has a more direct impact on financial markets."

News Story: U.S. Drone Kills Four Militants "Dawn" (02/18)

"A U.S. drone fired two missiles at a residential compound in Ghulam Khan area on Wednesday, killing four militants, local people said."

POLITICAL ISSUES

News Story: U.S. Wants Pak-India Talks To End Tensions - "Dawn" (02/18)

"The U.S. is quietly working for the success of the forthcoming talks between foreign secretaries of Pakistan and India for lowering tensions between the neighbors, which it sees as crucial for the success of its campaign in Afghanistan.... The U.S. efforts were highlighted by U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry's visit to the two capitals where his focus was said to be on peace between the two countries. The issue was also on the agenda of other senior American officials, including National Security Adviser James Jones and Under-Secretary of Defence Michele Flournoy who were in Pakistan this week. And Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke is reaching Islamabad on Thursday. Ms. Flournoy confirmed to a group of journalists that the U.S. was helping the two countries to make the dialogue successful."

ECONOMY/ENVIRONMENT

News Story: U.S. Draws Flak For Liaising With Army On 'Quick Impact Projects' - "Daily Times" (02/18)

"The United States' plan to execute 'quick impact projects' in the Tribal areas through the Pakistan Army rather than the civilian administration came under criticism during senior politicians meeting with visiting U.S. dignitaries, senior FATA Secretariat officials told 'Daily Times.'... According to sources, The U.S. delegation told the politicians that the Pakistan military was being 'relied upon' because the civil administration's capacity both in the NWFP and FATA was 'weak.'"

News Story: Pakistan On Path Of Economic Recovery: IMF - "Daily Times" (02/18)

"Pakistan's economic growth has started to recover despite security and energy challenges and the country met almost all targets under the International Monetary Fund program, the global financial institution said on Tuesday."

News Story: Pak-IMF Talks Successful: Tareen - "Daily Times" (02/18)

"Finance Minister, Shaukat Tareen said Pakistan achieved key financial success during talks with International Monetary Fund (IMF). According to him, IMF agreed to surge fiscal deficit over 4.9 percent and nodded to increase fiscal deficit for Pakistan by 5.1 percent, which will provide government with more funds for expenditures."

MISCELLANEOUS

News Story: First U.S. Science Envoys Begin Work In Muslim-Majority Countries American Scientists Seek New Partnerships To Address Global Challenges - "Ausaf" (02/18)

"At a time when many of the critical challenges that nations face are global in nature, three American scientists are setting out on separate journeys to Muslim-majority countries to strengthen and forge new partnerships in science, medicine, engineering and technology. They are part of a new Science Envoy program that President Obama announced in a June 4, 2009, speech at Cairo University, where he also called for a 'new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world.' The first envoys - Ahmed Zewail, Elias Zerhouni and Bruce Alberts - will visit Muslim-majority countries from North Africa to Southeast Asia from January through May."

News Story: U.S. Aircraft Carrier In HK - "Dawn" (02/18)

"A U.S. aircraft carrier arrived in Hong Kong Wednesday amid heightened tension between Washington and Beijing over arms sales to Taiwan and President Barack Obama's plan to meet the Dalai Lama. The stop by the USS Nimitz, one of the world's largest warships, came just weeks after China said it would suspend military and security contacts with the United States over Washington's 6.4-billion-dollar arms package for Taipei. It also coincided with a trip to Washington by exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama for a long-awaited meeting with Obama, a visit that has infuriated Beijing which has denounced him as a separatist bent on independence for his Himalayan homeland."

News Story: U.S. Accused Of War-Mongering - "Pakistan Observer" (02/18)

"Iran's supreme leader accused the United States on Wednesday of war-mongering and of turning the Gulf into an "arms depot," hitting back at U.S. accusations that the Islamic state was moving toward a military dictatorship. The comments by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei were the latest sign of growing tensions between Tehran and Washington, which are embroiled in a long-running and escalating row over Iranian nuclear work the West suspects is aimed at making bombs. The United States is leading a push for the U.N. Security Council to impose a fourth round of sanctions on Iran."

EDITORIALS/OPINIONS

Editorial: In The Bag, an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/18)

"Removing him (Mullah Baradar) from the field of play may be an intelligence bonus, but the Taliban have demonstrated a consistent ability to replace senior figures from within the ranks and although he will be a short-term loss his capture is unlikely to significantly weaken the long-term movement. However, there is real significance in the fact that he was caught by a Pakistan agency (perhaps working with the CIA) - and in Karachi. It establishes unequivocally that members of the 'Quetta Shura', whose existence has long been denied by our government, have decamped to Karachi. More significant is the shift in the way in which the Afghan Taliban are dealt with by our security agencies. Hitherto, there has been a hands-off policy, a blind eye to their presence and activities in Quetta or elsewhere."

Editorial: Mullah Baradar's Capture, an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/18)

"It's official. The ISPR's director general confirmed on Wednesday that a militant reportedly arrested in or near Karachi is indeed

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar... According to a Pakistani intelligence official quoted by the 'The Associated Press,' Mullah Baradar has already provided 'useful information.' Mullah Baradar's arrest is also significant in the context of the major U.S.-NATO offensive launched in southern Afghanistan just days ago.... Many believe his arrest sends a signal that Rawalpindi means business and any Afghan Taliban presence in Pakistan will not be tolerated. This in turn could compel some influential Taliban leaders to opt for dialogue, an outcome favored by both Afghanistan and the U.S. At the same time, the capture of the Taliban's top commander highlights the growing coordination and cooperation between Pakistani and U.S. intelligence agencies. This is a positive development that serves the cause of both countries and the region as a whole."

Editorial: Baradar's Arrest, an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/18)

"After Pakistani officials first dismissing the reports of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar's arrest from Karachi as propaganda, DG ISPR has finally confirmed The New York Times report in a press conference yesterday.... This significant capture should be seen in the context of the Marjah Operation by the U.S. and NATO forces in the Helmand province of Afghanistan. The strategy of the U.S. is to clear and hold the area through a show of strength.... It meant that instead of chasing shadows, they wanted to deal with the concrete task of giving the Afghan people something to believe in, in order to wean them away from militancy and the Taliban.... All these events suggest that the timing of Baradar's arrest and the release of its news are perhaps not coincidental. The speculations are that Baradar's arrest may open the door for negotiations with the Afghan Taliban leadership."

Editorial: Mullah Baradar's Arrest And The Campaign Against Terrorism, an editorial in the liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25, 000) (02/18)

"According to a news report, Afghan Taliban commander Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar was captured in a joint ISI-CIA operation in Karachi's Gulshan Iqbal area along with three aides.... This arrest is proof that the Pakistani and U.S. intelligence are in close contact with each other and this cooperation is producing positive results and securing major victories against the Taliban. Mullah Baradar's arrest is a major setback to the Taliban, and will weaken it further - creating hopes that we are getting closer to our goal of regional peace. Mullah Baradar's presence in Karachi proves that MQM's recent hue and cry about Taliban presence in Karachi was not wrong.... If reports of Mullah Baradar's arrest are correct, then the ISI's performance deserves to be applauded. The need is to continue such efforts so that peace can return to Pakistan."

Editorial: Arrest Of A High-Level Afghan Taliban Leader, an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (02/18)

"The capture of this high level Taliban commander and strategic expert is a result of joint efforts of the ISI and CIA.... It is being said that Mullah Baradar's arrest will prove to be a big blow to the Taliban and it is possible that during investigation, he would reveal important information about Mullah Umar and Usama Bin Laden.... Mullah Baradar's arrest could also give a "signal" to the Taliban that they do not have any safe havens in Pakistan and if they want to adopt the path of talks, they should trust Pakistan. In the context of Mullah Baradar's arrest, it can be said that there has been an improvement in intelligence-sharing between Pakistan and the U.S. as this capture would not have been possible without it."

Editorial: U.S.-Pak-India Relations, an editorial in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (02/18)

"American Senator John Kerry has said that America is willing to facilitate Pakistan-India dialogue on all the issues including Kashmir and water.... Senator Kerry has repeatedly offered help for Pak-India dialogue; he should be reminded that until 1969 the resolutions on Kashmir liberation were passed in the UN with the help of the United States.... Why does not America help Pakistan now in this respect...? If America takes interest in resolving Kashmir issue then Pakistan can guarantee peace in South Asia."

Editorial: India's Threatening Posture Towards Pakistan, China, an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (02/18)

"There can be no two opinions that every country has a right to take legitimate steps to boost its defence and India can be no exception. But going by the track record of that country and its aggressive designs against almost all neighbors, the ambitious plan to spend about \$17 billion a year over twelve years on acquisition of lethal weapons and technologies should be a cause to worry for neighboring countries especially Pakistan and China as New Delhi has made no secret of its intentions that the preparations are directed against them. One may recall the recent statement of the Indian Army Chief that India can engage in simultaneous war with Pakistan and China raising alarm bells both in Islamabad and Beijing.... Under these circumstances, it is imperative that our Government, relevant authorities and organizations focus their attention on the emerging danger from the East and should not concentrate on the West alone to please our Western friends."

Editorial: Route U.S. Aid Through Official Channels, an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (02/18)

"Of late, Pakistan is hammering out the point to the U.S. that its decision to spend assistance under the controversial Kerry-Lugar Act through NGOs would render the aid meaningless. During his meeting with Senator John Kerry on Tuesday, President Asif Ali Zardari stressed the need of channeling the U.S. aid through the Government in accordance with its priorities and programs to ensure transparency, accountability and efficacy. There was understandably no commitment by the visitor but it is important that Pakistani authorities should make it clear to the U.S. that the desired results would not be achieved from the aid if it was wasted like that. One fails to understand why Americans are insisting on spending the amount through NGOs of questionable background, creating suspicions that in practice the money would end up on plans and programs that have no relevance to the actual needs of Pakistani people.... We hope that the U.S. authorities would listen to the legitimate demand of the Pakistan Government in this regard."

Editorial: IMF's Fifth Tranche, an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000)(02/18)

"Pakistan and the IMF have successfully concluded talks for the release of the fifth tranche of IMF loan to the country.... Pakistan and the IMF have long-standing relations and Pakistan has always turned to IMF during times of need and obtained loans from it. Almost every political government has blamed the IMF for the economic ills facing the country. Similarly, every successive government announces ridding the country of these loans - but this does not go beyond making statements.... Actually, our rulers blame the IMF to cover their own corruption, loot and plunder.... In the past, IMF has demanded that Pakistan remove mismanagement from the country's system and improve the tax collection system so that foreign assistance is used in a transparent manner."

Opinion: A Worrying Contrast, an op-ed by Syed Talat Husain in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/18)

"What we see instead is a throwback to farcical politics and national priorities getting kicked around. Is it any wonder then that the entire development plan for FATA - the test case of the Pakistani state's ability to show that it can win the final battle against the terrorists - has been planned without much input from the government? Its funding is directly coming to the NWFP Governor, a civilian face that keeps democratic appearances from dropping altogether. The implementation body - the local military commander, the committee of elders, the political agent and the donor - is devoid of any thumbprint of the federal government. The President, the sole custodian of FATA under the constitution, is not even present by proxy in this entire scheme of things. Neither is the Prime Minister. A general breaking ground for development projects in South Waziristan is a worrying contrast to a president and a Prime Minister either shifting judges around or administering polio drops to perfectly healthy children."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson